

VZCZCXYZ0000
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHLM #0368 0641235
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 051235Z MAR 07
FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5580

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 000368

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/05/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [OVIP](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR AND FOREIGN MINISTER DISCUSS FOREIGN
MINISTER,S UPCOMING VISIT TO WASHINGTON; MINISTER TO
REQUEST OFFICIAL VISIT FOR PRESIDENT RAJAPAKS TO WASHINGTON

Classified By: Ambassador Robert O. Blake, Jr. for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Ambassador called on Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Rohita Bogollagama on March 5th to brief him on the Acquisition and Cross Servicing Agreement that Ambassador signed earlier in the day with Defense Secretary Rajapaksa(septel). Bogollagama expressed appreciation for the briefing. Neither he nor Foreign Secretary Kohona was aware of the agreement.

Bogollagama Visit

¶2. (C) The Ambassador took the opportunity to offer some suggestions for the Minister's upcoming visit to the United States to meet Secretary Rice on March 16. The Minister said he planned to spend the day of March 14 in New York on unspecified UN business and then spend March 15 and 16 in Washington. Ambassador suggested that in addition to meeting with Dr. Rice, the Foreign Minister plan to meet with A/S Boucher, do some public diplomacy at one of Washington's think tanks, and then spend the balance of his time meeting with members of the Sri Lankan Caucus in THE House of Representatives and interested senators whom Ambassador Goonatilleke would be able to identify. Bogollagama said this mirrored his thoughts exactly. He plans to contact former Ambassador Tezi Schaffer of the Center for Strategic and International Studies to see if she would organize a round table discussion. He also wanted an extensive round of calls on the Hill to explain the actions Sri Lanka had taken on the human rights and humanitarian issues that were of concern to them. Bogollagama said he would be accompanied by Foreign Secretary Kohona and the MFA Director General for Strategic Communications Ravinatha Ariyaratne, who just returned from a stint as Sri Lanka's Deputy Chief of Mission in Washington.

Rajapaksa Visit

¶3. (C) Bogollagama previewed that he would seek Dr. Rice's support for a visit by President Rajapaksa to Washington to meet with the President before President Bush leaves office. The Ambassador cautioned that such visits are laid on well in advance and comparatively rare. He suggested that prospects for getting White House approval for a visit or a meeting with the President would be greatly enhanced if President Rajapaksa succeeded in getting through Parliament a credible power sharing agreement that meets the aspirations of Sri Lanka's Tamil and other communities. Real progress on human rights would also be important the Ambassador advised. Bogollagama agreed noting that both were high priorities of his.

